



A NOTE FROM ANGELA:
HELPING WRITERS PERSEVERE

December 2011/January 2012



A CHANGE IN OUR FEE
STRUCTURE:
GIVING WHAT YOU CAN
IN THE NEW YEAR



PUBLISHING IN THE 2012
ANTHOLOGY
AND
GETTING READY FOR OUR
JANUARY SESSIONS

WNY Young Writers

DECEMBER/JANUARY NEWSLETTER

studio

The Power of Perseverance

A Note from Mrs. Stockman

Becoming a writer isn't typically the romantic process that some would like it to be. In fact, tremendous frustrations are often revealed when we talk with one another about our work.

"I don't know how to do this," writers will often admit.

"I don't want to do it either," they'll sometimes realize once the novelty of a new project that they've dreamed about has worn off.

Parents and teachers who work with struggling writers become well acquainted with a constellation of difficult emotions that often accompany their processes. Some will seethe in response to suggestions that we offer, consumed completely by their fear. Others might fall silent, distract themselves with other activities, or abandon the process all together.

Understanding writer's craft, developing a tool box that enables us to improve our own practice, and exposing ourselves to abundant examples of great writing—all of these things are critical to our work as writers. We also need to develop strategies that can help us sit with uncertainty, tolerate discomfort, and manage frustration as well though. During our

sessions this month, we'll be learning more about how we can persevere as writers.

The following tools, processes, and interventions have enabled the writers that I work with to persevere in the past, often against significant odds.

- When writers are provided choice and invited to write about the things that matter to them for real audiences that they can engage with, they are better able to persevere.
- When writers are invited to make use of the tools and technologies that serve them best and that enable them to connect with their intended audience in purposeful and efficient ways, they are better able to persevere.
- Helping writers reach out to those within and beyond the community who have expertise in areas that they struggle with is an important part of our work as teachers. The potential to network and learn from others online enriches this.
- When writers are invited to investigate models, identify their common elements, and use what they notice to create a vision of what quality looks like, they gain a level of clarity that enables them to establish clear targets.
- When writers create rubrics that reflect criteria for each stage of development, they literally design pathways that can, as needed, scaffold them toward success.
- When writers are invited to investigate models, identify their common elements, and use what they notice to define quality, they gain a level of clarity that enables them to establish clear targets.
- When writers create rubrics that reflect criteria for each stage of development, they design pathways that can scaffold them toward success. Rubrics also enable writers to pinpoint potential roadblocks with greater precision. This enables them to ask for support in a timely manner.
- Participating in meaningful peer-review processes provides writers with insight, ideas, and strategies that enable them to revise their thinking and their work.
- Criteria-specific feedback inspires writers to persevere, particularly when the feedback that is provided attends to one element of the writer's work at a time.
- Coaching writers to firewall their works in progress, to select effective mentors and coaches, and to advocate respectfully for themselves, for their work, and for the processes that have proven to help them can sustain help them sustain their energies and nurture their own process as well.



GIVING WHAT YOU CAN IN THE NEW YEAR!

This year, we will begin the fifth season of the WNY Young Writers' Studio. I can't tell you how much this means to me and how grateful I am to the teachers, parents, mentors, and writers who have given so much of their time and their talent in order to help us do this thing we do together. We have so much to celebrate:

- Over the last four years, we've grown substantially in numbers
- We've found a new home for our Erie County writers at Union East Elementary School in Cheektowaga
- We've opened our doors at the Kenan Center in Niagara County as well
- We've established a mentorship program for middle and high school writers who are interested in becoming teachers
- We've begun creating internship opportunities for those interested in using their other talents to contribute to what we do in some way
- We've integrated technology with purpose
- Teachers have begun writing themselves and pursuing a variety of action research projects
- We've started sharing all that we are learning with others by blogging, presenting at conferences, starting conversations in our schools, and leading mini-sessions at our writing celebration each spring
- We've published an annual anthology
- We've established virtual spaces that allow us to connect anytime we want to
- We've made space within our program for all who are interested in joining us, including those with significant financial needs
- We've problem-solved and persevered and found a way to overcome some significant hurdles in terms of time and space
- We've found ways to engage one another in collaborative planning and decision-making
- Sheri Barsottelli and I will be launching the first site-based Studio at Depew Middle and High School this spring. We're excited to begin helping young writers become mentors to one another there and starting an action research project of our own.
- Most importantly, we've seen many of the writers and teachers we began working with during our first season return year after year after year

And there is so much more that we are looking forward to accomplishing in this new year.

Those who have been a part of Studio for some time know that it has never been a for-profit venture. Our fees have ensured that we can cover operating costs, and this is what we've

managed to accomplish. Many children, parents, and teachers in our program have volunteered their time and talent in dozens of ways that ensured our success. This is how we've grown.

Studio is what it is because of the incredible people who believe in what we're trying to do here and who provide us their loving and ongoing support.

Over the years, we've worked hard to lower our operating costs significantly. We've located more affordable spaces that can support our need for certain technologies, we've researched and invested in the unique insurance coverage that we've needed, and we've built a reputation that has enabled us to scale back our advertising costs significantly.

Our lowered costs have brought us to a place where we are able to pursue a critical component of our mission with far greater intention. Four years ago, one of my ultimate goals as the founder of the WNY Young Writers' Studio was to create a place where all who were serious about growing as writers and teachers could find a home, regardless of their personal financial needs. This year, I'm proud to unveil a significant opportunity for all current and future Studio fellows: the shift to a ***give what you can*** fee structure.

As you register for our upcoming season, know that if you are able to pay our annual fee of \$180.00, we ask that you consider doing so. But if your family is unable to do this, please consider how you might contribute your time or talent to our community in other ways. We're most inspired by the children and adults who have thought carefully about what they are good at it and seriously about what they love to do. It has been incredible to watch them give of themselves in that have made Studio an amazing place to be.

So, what can ***you*** give? If it's money, we'll still take it. We have bills to pay certainly, and we always will. We know that this isn't possible for everyone though. If you can't pay the full amount, we will gratefully accept a donation of any kind. If you can't pay it all, please don't let this stop you from sending your child to Studio. Increase your involvement. Give what you can. We know that it will be more than enough.

In the coming months, we'll be sharing more details about the give what you can campaign and information about registration for our new season. For now, let me wish you and your family much love and laughter and joy in 2012. I'm looking forward to seeing you at Studio!

The 2012 WNY Young Writers' Studio Anthology

For the last two years, we have published an annual anthology of works in progress. We will be doing so again this year, and copies will be presented to all writers who choose to submit pieces at our end of the year celebration. Those who do not publish in the anthology but who wish to receive a copy of their own will have the opportunity to order them online after they are printed.

If you are interested in submitting a draft for review, please plan to do so by email prior to March 15th! I will provide all writers feedback and time to revise before final submissions are made in April. Remember, these may be pieces in progress, portions of novels or lengthier pieces, or even revisions of things you published in previous anthologies (I think it would be wonderful to see how your work has grown)!

Submissions must be sent to
stockmanangela@gmail.com
by March 15th!

See You in January!

An Important Update for Cheektowaga Fellows:

Hours before our November session, I was informed that Cheektowaga Central recently adopted new building usage policies that required us to resubmit our application to host Studio at Union East. This paperwork was submitted and we are due to be approved at the January 10th Board of Education meeting. I am confident that this will happen, but if it does not, you will be contacted about our alternate plan immediately. I apologize again for the inconvenience this might have caused some of you (and I was grateful to learn that some of you were actually relieved to have a Saturday opened up in your calendar after all). Those who are interested in making up this session are invited to join us anytime at our Kenan Center location.

Remaining Sessions:

Erie County Location: Cheektowaga Central School-Union East Elementary

January 21st, March 10th, May 19th

Niagara County Location: The Kenan Center, Lockport

January 14th, March 3rd, May 19th

Grades 1-5 meet from 9am-12pm

Grades 6-12 meet from 1pm-4pm

Teachers and interns, please arrive one half hour prior to the start of sessions!

Created by Angela Stockman, Founder of the WNY Young Writers' Studio, 2011
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